

# Barriers and Encounters of Navajo Female Administrators

by

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## ABSTRACT

Past research has determined the glass ceiling is still unbroken and that few women hold top positions as administrators as opposed to men. Men continue to dominate women in occupations of superintendent and secondary principals of schools. Cultural beliefs and traditions set limitations for Navajo female administrators regarding the taboo of “women can’t lead” mentality. The research questions in this study addressed perceived obstacles and barriers facing Navajo female school administrators, the extent Navajo female administrators believe Navajo beliefs limit their career advancement, and if Navajo female administrators believe they encounter more obstacles than their male counterparts. Data were collected from 30 Navajo female administrators in public and bureau-operated schools in New Mexico. The survey consisted of 21 questions in a Likert-scale format with restricted responses, accessed on a Survey Monkey website. Results of the survey indicated that the respondents generally believed their career choice and opportunities were supported. However, approximately a quarter of the respondents believed support and opportunities were limited. And the overall data suggest there is room for improvement in all areas. In spite of the negative views, the respondents believe other women should be encouraged to go into school administration.

*With admiration*

To my *shi nali ya'zhi* - grand-daughter

*Lilly Rain Whitman*

A blessing to our Family

&

A bundle of joy!



*With sincere gratitude....*

To my “assertive” daughter, “*SHEENA*”

Who made all things possible .....

With constant reminders of self-discipline

To stay on task and to sacrifice for time and effort

To always look at the bright side with *reverence*.

*Ahe'hee shi yazhi*

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*When you arise in the morning give thanks for the morning light for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food and the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies in yourself.*

–Tecumseh, Shawnee, 1768-1813

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Although the process was lengthy, my mind and heart opened up with the urgency of learning more in addition to what I know....*it was worth it after all.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*In Beauty we walk  
Beauty before us  
Beauty behind us  
Beauty above us  
Beauty under us  
Beauty all around us  
In Beauty it is returned  
In Beauty it is returned*

(Adams & Newlin 1987)

The great Navajo Nation extends into Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico covering 27,000 square miles across southwestern United States. The area is considered a place of natural beauty with an array of sacredness and life in mountains, mesas, animals, and directions.

Embracing the diversity, the Navajo people, *Dine'* relate to the land and place as their mother. *Dine'* people believe the beauty of Mother Earth, *Shima nahaszaan*, exists within themselves and treat the land with the utmost respect. The *Dine'* believe every creature and aspect of nature has its holy people. Its representations are shown in the sky, evening dusk, and the night, to which *Dine'* pray to. In addition there are holy beings of the dawn people, twilight people, air, thunder, and cloud people. Changing Woman known as *Diyin dine'e* with her children embody the powers to renew the earth, sun, moon, sky, wind, first man, first woman, and all helpers of holy people, *Diyin dine'e*.

*Dine'* respect the number four as part of the traditional philosophy that permeates with the four seasons, the first four clans, and the four directions associated with the four

sacred mountains. Each must be approached with proper ways to maintain balance and relationships in the universe.

The Navajo people *Dine'* have passed through three different worlds before emerging into the present world, the fourth world or the Glittering World. The *Dine'* believe they categorize two classes of beings, the Earth people and the Holy people. The first beings were Holy people, *Diyin dine'e* who lived before the Earth people. The Holy people, *Diyin dine'e* taught the Earth people how to live the right way and maintain harmony or balance with Mother Earth, Father Sky, and other elements such as man, animals, plants, and insects.

The 12 Holy people, *Diyin dine'e* formed the sacred mountains in the fourth world. The mountains were formed with prayers and songs along with positive thinking and understanding by the 12 holy people. Others were spirits within the sacred mountains that guide our life *Iina* by the two gods known as talking god and second talking god according to Aronilth (1991).

The sacred mountains are Mount Blanca to the east (*Tsisnaajini*, adorned with white shell); to the south, Mount Taylor (*Tsoodzil*, adorned with turquoise); to the west, Mount Humphrey (*Doko'oosliid*, adorned with abalone shell mountain); to the north, *Mount Hesperus* (*Dibe'Nitsaa*, adorned with black jet). There are other sacred mountains: Gobernador Knob (*Ch'ool'ii*, chimney adorn with hard goods) and Huerfano Mesa (*Dzil Na'oodilii*, doorway adorned with soft goods). The sacred mountains connect to thinking, knowledge, and way of life (*Iina*) for the Dine' people (Aronilth, 1991).

Our Navajo *Dine'* spiritual and social laws are represented through the fundamental laws of mostly original and contemporary thoughts to enhance *Diné* leadership, sovereignty, and governance. Most importantly, the Navajo Nation Council respect and practice the *Dine'* fundamental law of honor, belief, and trust to preserve, protect, and enhance the rights, beliefs, practices, and freedoms of individual *rights from the beautiful child who will be born today to the dear elder who will pass this day from old age* as declared in the laws and made by the holy people, *Diyin dine'e*.

The traditional law devotes respect to elders, medicine people, leaders of traditional law, values, and principles of *Diyin Bits'aadee Beehaz'aanii*. At any time when a person is in doubt, the elders and medicine people fill in to guide using the principles of the fundamental laws. From time to time elders and medicine people are requested to provide the cleansing, protection, and blessing way ceremonies to secure healthy leadership and government for all leaders of the tribe.

The Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo court system use the system to govern and to analyze legal cases on the reservation. Through the traditional *Dine'* stories, the elders and medicine people believe Holy people, *Diyin Dine'e* formed laws called the Fundamental Laws (Traditional Law, Customary Law, Natural Law, and Common law).

The *Dine' bi beenahaz'aanii* embodies these laws given to the *Dine'* to use and guide life, culture, and the relationship with the world beyond the sacred mountains and to maintain harmony and balance with the natural world. The Holy people established the Fundamental Law of *Dine' binahat'a* through leadership of developing and

administering policies and plans as guiding principles of *Dine* ' sovereignty and government.

The four laws embody important rights for Navajo people, *Dine* ' also known as the Holy Earth surface people, *Ni 'hookaa Diyin Dine 'e*. The responsible sources and mentors lie in the hands of the elders and the medicine people who guide the teachings of fundamental laws of the holy people, *Diyin dine 'e* used today in the Navajo tribal court systems as part of peacemaking and *Ke* ' relationship if a dispute occurs among the *Dine* ' Navajo People Zion (n.d., Native Web).

The *Dine* ' way of life is connected with Fundamental Laws, traditional, customary, natural, and common law set by holy people, *Diyin dine 'e*. The laws are still honored and respected through the tribal council and tribal courts system of settling family disputes using peacemaking. In addition traditional medicine men, the association of spiritual leaders, cultural teachers, and elders respect the laws of holy people, *Diyin dine 'e* and still speak to it. The Navajo Nation court system has been successful in helping families and individuals rectify issues ranging from domestic violence involving families and other disputes using *Ke* ' peacemaking.

### **Leaders of Diverse Qualities**

There are diversity among leaders with various attributes, behavior, and fashion. "Leaders come in many forms, with many styles and diverse qualities" (Bass, 2007, p. 21) from quiet leaders to leaders that can be heard in the next country. Leaders have strengths in eloquence, commonly known as silver tongue and being persuasive, some in judgment and courage. Leaders inspire shared vision and a dream of what it could be like

to accomplish set goals. Leaders envision and gaze across the horizon with imaginative attractive opportunities that lie ahead and look ahead from a distant destination. Some leaders are aware of what they are and what they want to achieve while other leaders (Bow, personal interview, 2003) described what

leaders look for and do the same ole, same ole, thing and resist change. In this case of the same ole, same ole, the results will be the same ole result because no change took place. No change in the environment, no change in programs, no change in people, just same ole.

Leaders perform tasks or functions for a purpose that are essential to the group to accomplish. In a school system, there are state-mandated requirements placed upon administrators to fulfill. One is to raise the achievement levels of the students or show growth, which is a part of accountability for all staff, administrators, and directors to the top administrator, and the superintendent (Bennis, 2003, p. 133). To do this, leaders must be right-brain and left-brain thinkers and must be intuitive, conceptual, synthesizing, and artistic as stated by Bennis (2003).

### **Models of Leadership**

Leithwood and Duke (1999) identified six types of models of leadership:

- *Instructional leadership*: focus on behaviors of teacher engagement in activities directly affecting the growth of the students.
- *Transformational leadership*: focus on commitments and capacities within organizational members. Applies to charismatic, visionary, cultural, and empowering concepts of leadership.

- *Moral leadership*: Refers to values and ethics of the leader, a concern in the body of research in which values and ethics are used to make decisions and how conflicts in values are resolved.
- *Participative leadership*: A group decision-making process with respect.
- *Managerial leadership*: Applies to functions, tasks, or behaviors of the leader.
- *Contingent leadership*: Gives alternatives for leaders to take into consideration the unique circumstance or problems they face.

Approaches are designed to enhance school culture or performance in various ways (Bennis, 2003).

### **Sources**

There are three sources of renewal for human and educational change: trust, confidence, and emotion. In the past, “Centuries ago, Confucius said that a government needs three things: weapons, food, and trust” (Bass, 2007). Trust is the indispensable resource for improvement. Effective organizations depend on trust and trust amounts to people being able to rely on each other. The world and relationships will have coherence and continuity. “When we trust, we believe others will act in a reasonable predictable way, according to agreed-on or assumed expectations, in a context of shared understanding and assumptions of good faith—even and especially when we or they are absent” (p. 461).

Reina and Reina (1999) stated there were three forms of trust:

- Contractual trust that is expressed through impersonal, objective, and agreed-on-targets, clear job descriptions, homework contracts to meet obligations, complete contracts, and keep promises.
- Competence trust that delegates in good faith and provides professional development for others to be competent and willing to provide sufficient support.
- Communication trust that is clear, high quality and open, having frequent communication, sharing information, telling the truth, keeping confidences, and admit to mistakes.

The opposite side to trust is betrayal that occurs when trust is not there or broken. Trust in a school is truly essential, yet sometimes we see less trusting in our societies (pp. 461-463).

The next source of energy is confidence as explained by Harvard business professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2004) who related that confidence “consists of positive expectations for favorable outcomes. Confidence influences the willingness to invest-to commit money, time, reputation, emotional energy, or other resources-or to withhold or hedge investment” (p. 464).

The key ingredients to building a successful business is winning teams and keeping confidence level up because once lost confidence is difficult to regain. Hargreaves (1998) mentioned positive emotion creates energy; negative emotions saps it. There are many ways of understanding the role of emotions in organizations. Roles of emotion are important in educational leadership that involves extensive emotional work

of being responsible for motivating others and managing moods and feelings for those involved (Bass, 2007, p. 466).

Team relationship can build positive communication and relationships. “We must work with human needs and capabilities and potentials rather than against them if we are to create positive teams that succeed and at the same time foster the health and well-being of those who work within them” (Bass, 2007, p. 7). More so the team should share tasks that require people to work together in communicating, sharing information, and possibly debating about decisions and ways to best do the job. The other is contributing to the organizational goals (West, 2012, p. 7, 30).

### **Women and Education Leadership**

The number of women in educational administration has declined greatly since 1950. After World War II ended, women’s work status changed; some were dismissed or demoted and men took their places.

Today women wait longer for promotions, and most of them are expected to present higher qualifications than men at the same level when applying for advancement. In secondary education, as in most other professions, a man is usually hired before a woman if the candidates have equal qualifications. (Bach, 1976, p. 464)

### **Dine’ Bi Naat’aani: Navajo Leader**

Leadership in the Navajo *Dine’* language for a leader is *naat’aani*, comes from the ancient *nanit’aani*, defined as the speaker or exhorter. The word is in the Apache language as *nant’an* and is used as a verb for speaking or orating. To *Dine*, the origin of the term is derived from the third, yellow underworld, when the holy people selected the first *nant’aani*.



Before contact with the Spaniards and Puebloans, the political organization was very small but unique. Each family group was guided by one *nanit'aani* who were led by the *hastui* or elders and the *hatahli*, the medicine man, based on knowledge, wisdom and experience. There were head leaders like *Go'tsohi*, Big Knee of the *Ta'baha*, Edge Water People, and *Nabinleeth* of the *Tsejikini*, Black Rock House, in-cliff, people who met every night to talk about language and to instruct the people to live in a good peaceful way. These events happened before *Dine'* left for *Dine'tah* in northern New Mexico now considered the ancestral homeland for the Navajo people.

Around the 1700s, the Spaniards influence began and late in that century *Dine' naat'aani* were appointed. *Dine'* became allies of the Spanish and bribes were passed by *Hashke lik'izhi*, Speckled Warrior, and eventually war and raiding resulted. Elders or *hastui* and *Hastiin Naat'aani* headed by leaders as *Hastiin Nabaaha*, man of war got together and encouraged raids on pueblos and other Rio Grande settlements. The warrior raiders of the *Dine'* became exiles when taken to Fort Sumner from 1863 to 1864 by Carson and his volunteers. There were two *naat'aani* during the post for the Fort Sumner era, *Hastiin Childhadjini*, Man of Black Weed was Manuelito and Haske' yichi Dahilwo, Is Anxious to run at Warriors was Barboncito whose fame of defeating the Mexicans finalized in Salina, Arizona and Whiskey Lake in the Chuska Mountains in 1850. The first Navajo Tribal Council was established in 1924. Henry Chee Dodge was appointed the Head Chief. The new *naat'aani*, Dodge, was the first to lead a formal leadership for the Navajo Nation (Valkenburgh, 1948).

Today additional appointees were selected to serve as council delegates in surrounding chapters of the Navajo reservation. Out of 24, there were 23 males (95.83%) and one female (4.17%) serving on the council for New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

### **Servant Leaders**

Leaders of the past were described as servant leaders who believed in working on needs first and not on their own needs. Holiday (2006) used Spears (1995) to explain the servant leadership concept, coined by Robert K. Greenleaf of 1970 and identified the critical characteristics of the servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community. These characteristics are connected to perceptions of Native American life as well.

An example of a servant leader was Navajo Chief Barboncito, appointed by the people to give services for the people first before his own. Holiday (2006) cited Navajo Chief Barboncito's speech from The Navajo Treaty of 1868:

The bringing of us here has caused a great decrease of our numbers, many of us have died, also a great number of our animals. Our Grand-fathers had no idea of living in any other country except their own and I do not think it right for us to do so as we were never taught. . . . I hope to God you will not ask me to go to any other country except my own. (pp. 2, 5)

Chief Joseph was another servant leader who led his men to protect people and land. After more than 200 Nez Pierce lost their lives, Chief Joseph surrendered on a cold and snowy day to General Nelson Miles on October 5, 1877. Chief Joseph sadly uttered his speech (Brady, 1910, *Northwestern Fight and Fighters*).

Tell General Howard that I know his heart. What he told me before—I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking glass is dead. *Too-*

*bul-bul-suit* is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men now, who say “yes” or “no” [that is, vote in council]. He led the young men [Joseph’s brother Ollicut] is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people—some of them—have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find; maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs, my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.

### **Unbroken Glass Ceiling**

The glass ceiling is known as “a metaphor for the invisible and artificial barriers that block women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions.” Among other things, compensation for women is lower than their male counterpart (Johns, n.d.).

Some revealed that the notion of “think manager-think male” was reviewed in many studies. It was noted that Dominici, Fried, and Zeger (2009) advocated that “*paths to leadership are slower and often blocked for women.*” Women have to be involved in directing academic programs and committees before going into senior leadership roles. In addition women who are in leadership are not as well recognized as men, as reported by focus groups of the university (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012).

### **Statement of Purpose**

Past research has determined the glass ceiling is still unbroken and that few women hold top positions as administrators as opposed to men. Men continue to over represent women in occupations as a superintendent or as a secondary principal of schools. Female administrators continue to face more obstacles than male administrators and remain underrepresented in leadership positions. Women, more than men, go

through more levels, steps, and hoops before reaching the top positions. Men are able to take a stride once to get to the top (Bow, personal interview, 2003).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this research:

1. What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they moved along their career ladder?
2. To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions, or expectations limit their career advancement?
3. Do female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counterparts?

### **Organization of Study**

The study is organized into five chapters as follows: Chapter 1 presents a brief history of the Dine people as to their origins, beliefs, their holy people, and spiritual and social laws. Also discussed is the general definition of a leader and his or her accountability, followed by definitions of different types of leadership and a discussion as to trust. Winning teams are team relationships are described. Chapter 2 describes a brief historical information of women in leadership. It includes barriers and obstacles that women face as leaders. Chapter 3 presents the research questions and methodology of study. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the survey taken by 30 Navajo female administrators. Findings are described using graphs, referred to as figures. Chapter 5 contains conclusions and recommendations. The study concludes with references and appendices at the end.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Historical Information**

In 1870, nearly two thirds of women became teachers in public schools (Williams, 1929). School teaching shifted from men to women teachers working in schools in the 19th century. Historians named it a period of “feminization of teaching” for women (Albisetti, 1993). As a result more opportunities were given to women to become teachers and administrators. The women moved up as leaders in elementary schools according to Williams (1929). After World War II ended, men returned to teaching and took over formal leadership in schools, specifically as junior high, high school, and superintendents. Soon women were being labeled as ineffective as Little (1983, 1984) explained and talks were expressed among men. A project was imposed by men that identified at least a dozen statements and beliefs espoused by male administrators to keep women from actively joining the ranks of school administration (Barnes, 1976; Gross & Trask, 1976; Krchniak, 1978; McClough, 1977; Owens, 1975; Schmuck, 1975). The statements include the following: (cited by Little, 1983, p. 78).

- Women should mainly be responsible for their husbands and children (cultural assumption of all women in the home).
- Not very many women receive degrees in administration.
- Women do not have a commitment to career preparation.
- Women do not really want to become administrators.
- It is too expensive to adequately advertise for women applicants.

- Men are better suited for administrative positions:
- Women can't handle discipline problems.
- Women do not work effectively with co-administrators.
- Women are too emotional.
- Women should not be aggressive.
- Women are too indecisive.
- Female teachers prefer working for male administrators.
- Parents and communities prefer men principals.
- Women cannot identify with the “locker room” mentality.
- Women will not fit into the group, nor help protect each other's jobs.
- Women do not make good administrators because of lack of experience with budgets.

Despite these stereotyped views, women proved to be excellent school administrators. Additionally, “The difference between men and women in their performance . . . is that women involved teachers, superiors and outsiders in their work while men tended to make final decisions and take action without involving others” Little (1983, pp. 77-78).

The cycle continues and women still hold a large percentage of teaching positions in the school systems and a lower percentage in administration. Some of the barriers women encounter include gender wage gap, underrepresentation of females, negative impact in the workplace by male counterparts, cultural approval, fewer career advancement opportunities for women, and other circumstances as women move up their

career ladder. This creates difficulty for female administrators who want to become administrators. If only educators, district personnel, school boards, and administrators would take a closer look as to why this may be and make attempts to resolve issues and find solutions for overcoming the barriers.

The gender gap is used to show the statistical numbers of gender ethnicity for the state of New Mexico. Data are used to determine the gap involved for male and female employees for teaching and administrative positions.

### **Gender Gap**

A statistical report of New Mexico Personnel, 2004-2005, was reviewed to determine gender ethnicity for superintendents. Of the 89 superintendents, 29 (32.58%) were females superintendents, 67.42% were male superintendents. There were fewer female superintendents than male superintendents in New Mexico schools. Males dominate the schools as superintendents in New Mexico.

Male workers also occupy the majority (60 at 46%) of administrative positions as director of activities, director of athletics, high school principals, and junior high principals as opposed to female leaders (39.54%) in the same positions as males. There are more male leaders in the top positions of administration. More females work as teachers (75.23%) than males (24.77%). Females lead the positions for elementary principals (65.75%) as opposed to males (34.25%). Teaching and elementary administrative positions are still led by females like the 19th century.

New Mexico has a wage gap between men and women working full time on a yearly basis. The median pay for women is \$32,234 while the median for men is

\$41,023. Women are paid 79 cents for every dollar paid to men with a yearly gap of \$8,789 as reported by the state's Fact Sheet (April, 2012).

### **Barriers and Obstacles Women Encounter**

There are many conclusions drawn about the barriers that keep women out of school administration. Some of these are beyond their control when it comes to promotions and career advancement. Some barriers are mostly created and decided by the top male leaders within the school districts while others are factors of other forces.

Because of male dominance in society, recruitment and selection procedures are managed largely by men or by a tokenism of the few women who get promoted (Riehl & Byrd, 1997, p. 46; Sokoloff, 1980; Stockard & Johnson, 1981). Male dominance is one reason why a few women get promoted, leaving a barrier for other women in the workplace, according to Kanter (1997) and Shakeshaft (1989).

Before Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery on January 1, 1863, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were heroes who fought slavery. They did all they could to end slavery, including helping them to escape. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were not recognized as leaders but men received the credit for their accomplishments (Edleman, 2013).

Male mentors working with females can cause problems if they began to work together and spending a lot of time communicating with one another. Mentoring can cause relationship issues as a result of jealous spouses and resentful co-workers (Driscoll & Bova, 1980; Gutek & Sprell, 1985). An example of problems faced in cross gender mentoring relationships can result in office gossip, which gossip ends up placing



attractive females in a position to defend themselves against discrediting attacks and innuendos (Cunningham, 1984). To avoid rumors, Clawson and Kram (1984) suggested the female and her male mentor must be careful and watch their behaviors to avoid appearing overly friendly (Belle, 1989).

The stereotypic definitions of a “good mother” can conflict with the definitions of a “good worker.” Even though both parents work, the mother is the primary caretaker along with performing domestic duties around the house (Garey, 1995). Some have called this scenario as the *second shift* (Horschild & Machung, 1989). A cultural norm is that men are considered providers for their families, but they could put their roles at work before the family (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011). In addition, because of all the pressure placed on working mothers, they often decide to quit or change their jobs and concentrate on their families (Nordstrom, 2008).

Women in technological careers feel out of place if dominated by males and consequently will not do as well as opposed to the male. Women in computer science or engineering careers face a male-oriented culture with a message of “women just don’t fit” (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Robinson & McIlwee, 1991; Wright, 1997). Male tendencies of competitive posturing and boasting are seen in computing career and academic environments, and women are perceived as knowing very little in comparison to male peers (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). Consequently, women may not do well and lose confidence (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2006).

There was a time the executive suite could not break the glass ceiling when the President of the United States made a comment why he should not appoint a woman in

charge. President Richard Nixon made public as to why he would not appoint a woman to the U.S. Supreme Court. Nixon stated, “I don’t think a woman should be in any government job whatsoever . . . mainly because they are erratic and emotional. Men are erratic and emotional, too, but the point is a woman is more likely to be.” Under Nixon, women had no chance of attaining influential leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Workplace career advancement for woman is limited due to networking with men and organizational cultures that do not approve women to be a part of. Women view some activities less appealing, such as male outings, sports centers, social clubs, or restaurants. Some mothers may not have the advantages to socialize in the evenings and to drink after work, which are forms of networking and are hard for busy mothers to engage in. Mothers with small children pick up their kids from daycare, do homework, prepare dinner, and perform other chores in the home. Females indicate that men enjoy networking in social clubs rather than on a worksite. So if females are not part of the social clubs, then they will not be considered for promotion.

For a woman it is never enough to work eight hours a day, because performing extra duties is a path for promotion. If the woman cannot take on extra duties, then the promotions are limited. Fields (1983) explained that women in businesses are required to do “hard work” as part of career advancement, thus they are required to give more to the job than what the job entails, not assigned duties but additional assignments, listed below, that might make the company more money:

- Do more by taking courses related to work or company

- Learn to deal with people, to motivate, and continue to do more and be productive
- Get a mentor, preferably someone in the workplace to aid in career development

Education was the major contributing factor to success and “learning new skills” with changing technologies (Fields, 1983, p. 152).

### **Cultural Beliefs & Traditions**

Cultural beliefs and traditions can limit Navajo women to advance into leadership roles. It has been stated that women are important leaders because of their household expectations of owning a home, taking care of livestock, and working the land. As explained by (Whitman, personal interview, 2008) leadership positions outside of the home are not for women but considered a taboo, specifically as President of the Navajo Nation.

In the third world (Reid, 2001, p. 2) there was a quarrel that split men from women for four years. Though the group reunited, the result gave birth to a women can't be a leader mentality because women stated, “We can live without men” but given the leadership only brought chaos and confusion among women leadership. Some Navajos still respect the legend, especially among the elders, spiritual leaders, cultural teachers, and medicine people. (as cited in Salabiye-Gishey, 2014, p. 33)

In 2010, Lynda Lovejoy was the first female candidate for the Navajo Nation President. A spiritual leader spoke to the legend of the third world and explained why Navajo women should not lead the Navajo Nation. Medicine woman Eunice Mason stated,

At the time that she's becoming a leader, if there are any pregnant women out there, when they bear their children, they're going to bear monsters with bad character and these are the ones that are going to grow up and rise up and destroy the people. (para. 2-3)

Lovejoy called it *traditional fears*. Lovejoy spoke about capabilities, abilities, skills, knowledge, but left gender aside (Kraker, 2010, p. 2). Lovejoy was defeated by Ben Shelly for Navajo Nation President (Kraker, 2010).

A few years ago, in 1998, Lenora Fulton faced criticism from Navajo Dine' men and women that Navajo women should not be leaders as it will lead to chaos. Navajo women have been discouraged even in local community politics. On the other hand, women are chosen for Miss Navajo Nation within the government and serve as ambassador of the Navajo Nation. The author further explained how women suffered colonialism and continue to face counter gender oppression (Denetdale, 2006, pp. 9-10).

### **Legacy of a Strong Female Leader**

A well-known female model leader in the past for the Navajo Nation was Dr. Annie Dodge Wauneka, known to be strong and dedicated leader throughout her lifetime. Dr. Wauneka's father was Henry Chee Dodge, a well-known leader and the first tribal chairman of the Navajo Nation. Wauneka learned from her father while observing him helping people.

Annie Dodge Wauneka is the second women leader to be recognized and signified as being strong and powerful when it came to speaking for the *Dine'* Navajo people. Her roles were chapter spokesperson in Klagetoh, Arizona, a member of the first grazing committee to mediate the confusion of rules and regulations concerning livestock; assisted a medical team in health education; and helped the team to eradicate tuberculosis, pneumonia, and diarrhea on the reservation through the radio station by

broadcasting health education on ways to care for self, by dressing appropriately and keeping up with hygiene and cleanliness.

While serving on the Tribal Council seating for 27 years, Wauneka was the only woman among the men. She served many years as a politician in the tribal government. Wauneka was never reluctant to speak out as a politician for “*the people, Dine,*” which led to her recognition beyond the Navajo reservation when awarded by John F. Kennedy the Peace Prize in 1976, chosen as Women of the Year among ten others, and receiving an honorary doctorate degree.

Dr. Wauneka recalls leadership responsibilities were instilled in Navajo women, which she saw as nothing new because women had ownership of hogans. Their herds were built upon the matrilineal clan. Women were responsible for the family land and made decisions guided by natural laws of spiritual antecedents in the previous worlds. Spider Woman and the White Shell Woman are representations of Navajo women.

Spider Woman is known to have taught the *Dine* people weaving spirits and songs related to form various shapes, colors and forms. Spider Man constructed the tools and loom.

White Shell Woman or Changing Women (Earth Mother) as explained by Reichard (1934) is a deity responsible for *Kinaalda*, puberty ceremony for young girls reaching adulthood and becoming a woman to have children without complications.

Changing Women established the first four clans. She gave women power of the household with matrilineal authority descent passed through the maternal clan, followed by paternal clan. Women are recognized as keepers of the home and decisions are made by women. (Witt, 2006)

Dr. Wauneka stood strong among male leaders with the focus of helping her people. Doing business was her role and it was not enough. Wauneka uttered continuously, “I will go and do more” (Witt, 1981, pp. 64-67).

## **Female Leaders**

For many years women were silent but now more Native American female leaders are speaking out to make changes in leadership and to involve women. President Theresa Two Bulls, Oglala Sioux; and Chief Glenna Wallace, Chief of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma in 2006 and business council for 20 years have been actively involved and will model for others. Wallace related,

Because of Native American cultural tendencies, there are some men who believe, almost like a biblical verse, that women should just be silent. . . . Then there are some who say, “I never thought women should be chiefs, but you changed my mind.”

Wallace urged to be the forefront of tribal leadership for women leaders. She believed:

Females in almost every culture, simply from statistics, have a longer role, a greater role, in taking care of the next generation, . . . We just can’t afford to be meek and mild anymore.

Chairperson Janice Mabee of the Sauk-Suiattle tribe challenged on a daily basis the “good ol’ boys” system, which was formed by the government, but was now ready for change (Young, n.d). Women leaders want to see changes in the system; include women leaders and support for strong government (Young, n.d).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to determine what female Navajo administrators perceived as obstacles or barriers as they moved along their career path. This research was a quantitative study in which data were collected from a survey distributed to 30 Navajo female administrators in public and bureau-operated schools in New Mexico. The survey consisted of 21 questions in a Likert-scale format with restricted responses. Numerical data showing percentages and graphs with descriptions were created. The questionnaires were comprised of four sections, which include ethnicity and position information, experiences of obstacles and barriers, or limitations of cultural belief and traditions that hinder career advancement for Navajo female administrators; or other factors that impact women in their workplace, to a certain extent causing limitations of moving upward in a career path.

#### **Restatement of the Problem**

The problem of the study was to investigate career barriers and encounters and factors perceived by female Navajo school administrators who serve in the public and bureau-operated schools. There was limited research regarding the general topic of Navajo female school administrators. More extensive research towards Navajo is needed. The core research of this study sought to investigate what Navajo female administrators experienced or perceived as barriers as they advanced up their career ladder. The study was centered around three research questions:

1. What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they move along their career ladder?
2. To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions, or expectations limit their career advancement?
3. Do Navajo female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counter parts?

### **Research Methodology**

A quantitative approach was used to describe and compare the administrators' responses from the survey instrument concerning perceived barriers and encounters experienced by Navajo female administrators. Surveys were left with the school secretaries, 10 a piece, to five elementary schools, 12 surveys to 12 junior high schools, and eight surveys to eight high schools. In addition five more surveys were emailed to New Mexico School administrators identified in the New Mexico central school website. A total of 30 participants returned completed surveys.

School administrators were selected as participants who worked in New Mexico public schools, Bureau of Indian Education schools, and Bureau of Indian Education Grant and Contract schools. The selection criteria consisted of the following:

- New Mexico certified school administrators
- Is female with Navajo ethnic background
- School administrators having one to 10 plus years of experience
- School administrator at the elementary, middle, or high school



## **Instrumentation**

The tool used to obtain data consisted of a survey instrument designed through the Survey Monkey website using a Likert-scale format. The survey questions were developed around areas to be considered important to the understanding of female administrators' workplaces and leadership positions. The completed data were manually input into the Survey Monkey system and data were obtained from Survey Monkey, which is to be considered reliable and valid as the system calculated the results using base numbers and percentages of respondents' answers. The survey window was from June 2015 to February 2016 and collected through email, U.S. mail, the agency's secretary, and individually by the researcher.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

Collection of data procedures were conducted as follows:

1. Packets were made for all public and bureau-operated schools in New Mexico.
2. Phone calls were made to schools to recruit participants, giving them a call-back number to the researcher.
3. Voluntary participants were supplied copies in the office for the secretary to deliver and collect.
4. Surveys were emailed to voluntary participants and returned as scanned copies.
5. Follow-up phone calls and delivery of surveys were made to principals who forgot to complete or misplaced the surveys. Surveys were collected the same day by the researcher.
6. Participants were given a form of confidentiality assurances.

Out of the first set of 15 surveys left with the agency secretary of the schools, five were returned as complete. The next set of surveys was distributed through email; five surveys were returned as scanned copies. Seven were voluntary participants who completed the survey at the school site. Thirteen more surveys came in the mail.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The first section of the data analysis consisted of administrators' responses to each of the questions with numbers and percentages. The next step was to develop twenty-one bar graphs through Survey Monkey so as to have detailed representations for each of the survey questions. Each question was graphed so as to picture and summarize the data. Then patterns and themes were identified to compare and cross-tabulate and connect to the research questions. The breakdown of data helped to better understand the viewpoints presented by the participants' responses.

### **Limitations**

The sample consisted of public and bureau-operated administrators with 30 participants within New Mexico. Because the population was only a few and did not include participants from other schools or counties, the findings were limited. The age group of participants would have been helpful to use and cross-tabulate by age differences. To schedule a window for participants is helpful for survey submissions so the turn-around would be faster and quicker to review. Navajo female administrators were few in numbers in the county of McKinley in New Mexico.

## **Summary**

The data received were from respondent administrators who contributed information about barriers and encounters of Navajo female administrators' experience as they sought career advancement and career paths. To identify the perceived barriers and encounters that hindered the process of career advancement will help our future female administrators to understand the school systems and take proper steps for the challenges ahead. As a researcher, I am anticipating that the findings from this study will help women gain insight on how to overcome barriers that exist so parity will be reached not only as a principal but also at the top level as a superintendent.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The findings discussed in this chapter were derived from the data collected through a Likert-scale format asking 21 questions regarding perceived barriers and encounters experienced by Navajo female administrators through their career path. The survey instrument used is described in Chapter 3. Data were collected from surveys administered to 30 Navajo female school administrators who gave responses to each of the questions. Female Navajo administrators were asked 21 questions that focused around the following research questions:

- What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they move along their career ladder?
- To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions, or expectations limit their career advancement?
- Do Navajo female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counterparts?

The results from the 21 questions are presented in this chapter under each question heading. The responses are documented according to themes from information given by participants.

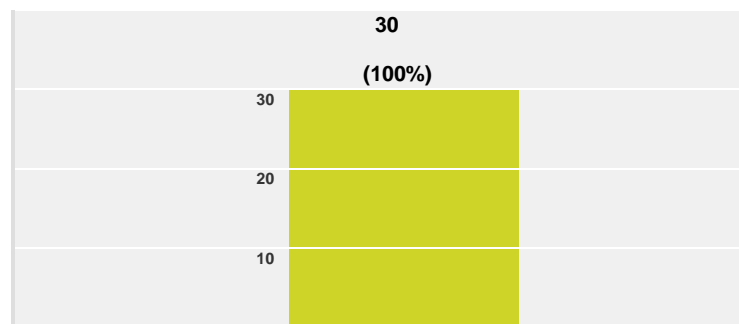
#### **Demographics**

The first part of the survey asked four questions as to the participants' general demographical information: (a) ethnic background, (b) current administrative positions,

(c) school level, and (d) years of service. The demographics served as background overview of participants included in the survey.

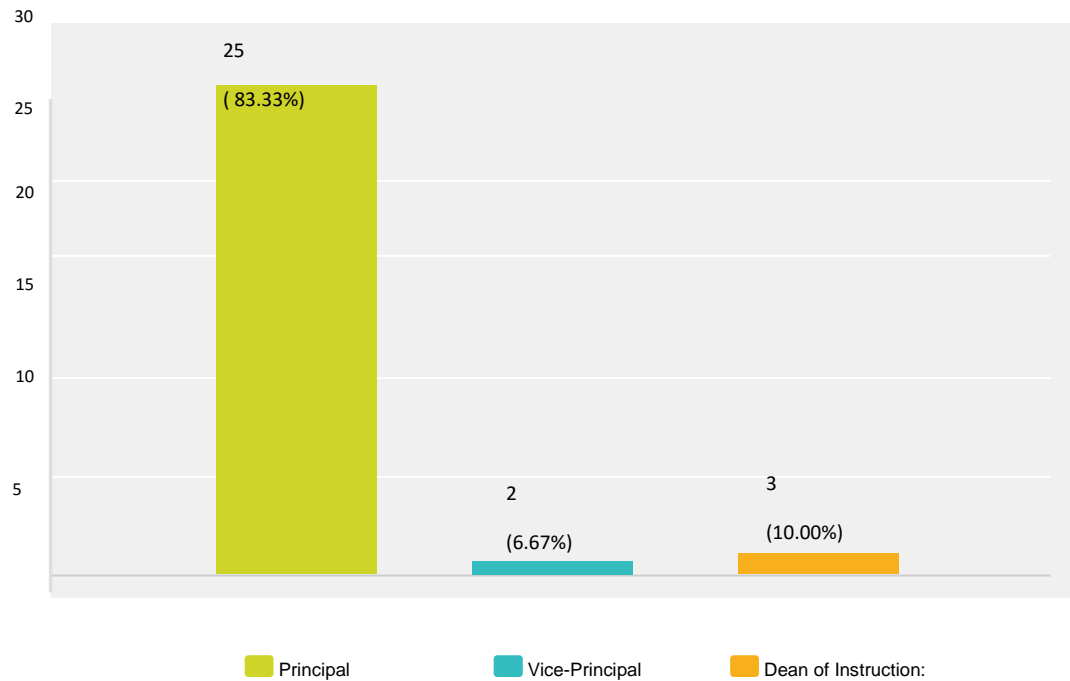
### **Ethnicity**

Question 1 relates to participants' ethnic background, which is Navajo. There were 30 responses answering "yes" (100%) and zero responses answering "no" (0%). All 30 (100%) participants specified Navajo as their ethnic background, which was important as the entire survey is related to Navajo female administrators (Figure 1 pictures this data).



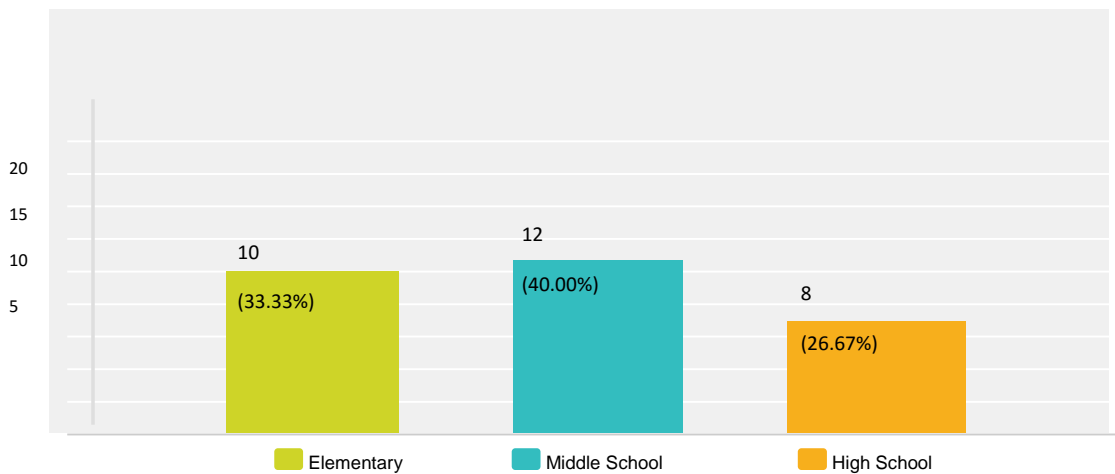
*Figure 1.* Question 1: Ethnic background

Question 2 asked the 30 participants if their current administrative position was either a principal, vice principal, or a dean of instruction. Results indicated the highest percentage were principals at 25 (83.33%); the next highest, dean of instruction at 3 (10.00%); the last, vice-principal at 2 (6.67%). Total responses were 30 (100%). The numbers showed principals were the highest in number (Figure 2).



*Figure 2. Question 2: Administrative position*

Question 3 asked as to the level of the school in three categories: elementary, middle, and high school. The highest percentage was the middle school at 12 (40.00%), followed by the elementary school at 10 (33.33%), and last, the high school at 8 (26.67%). Total responses were 30 (100%). Respondents from the middle school and elementary school indicated a greater percentage of participation. The high school respondents were 6.66%, lower than the average (Figure 3).



*Figure 3. Question 3: School level*

Question 4 asked about the length and years in administration in four categories: 1 to 3 years, 4 to 7 years, 5 to 9 years, and 10 or more years. The results indicated the following percentage of responses: 10 or more years at 11 (36.67%); 1 to 3 years at 8 (26.67%); 4 to 7 years at 6 (20.00%); 5 to 9 years at 5 (16.67%). Total of 30 responses equals 100%. The highest group responding were 10 or more years; then 1 to 3 years in administration; following 4 to 7 years; and last 5 to 9 years. Respondents' combined percentages were in the categories of 10 or more years and 1 to 3 years of services in administration. Closely related in percentages were 1 to 3 years with participants having to put in 8 years in the first to third year. Holding an average of all service years is truly a great start for the new administrators coming in (Figure 4).

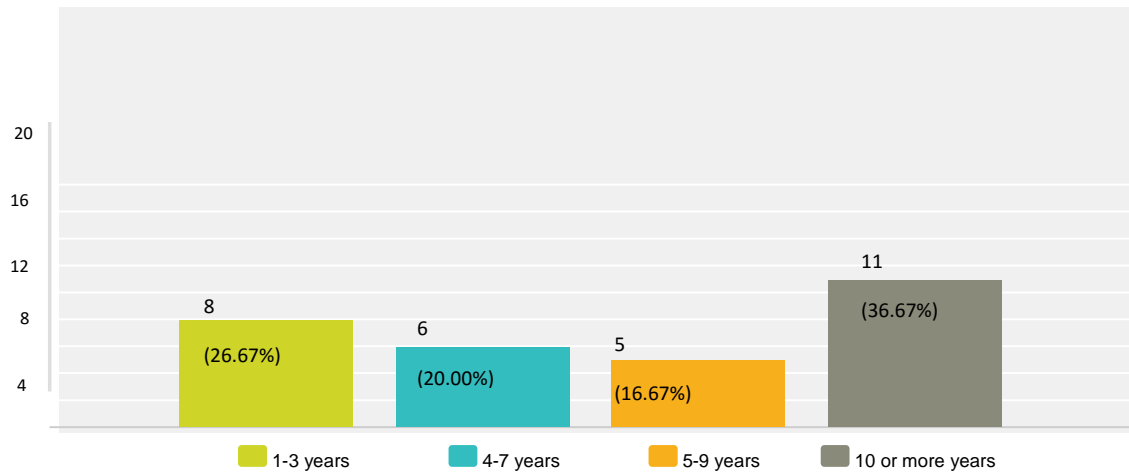


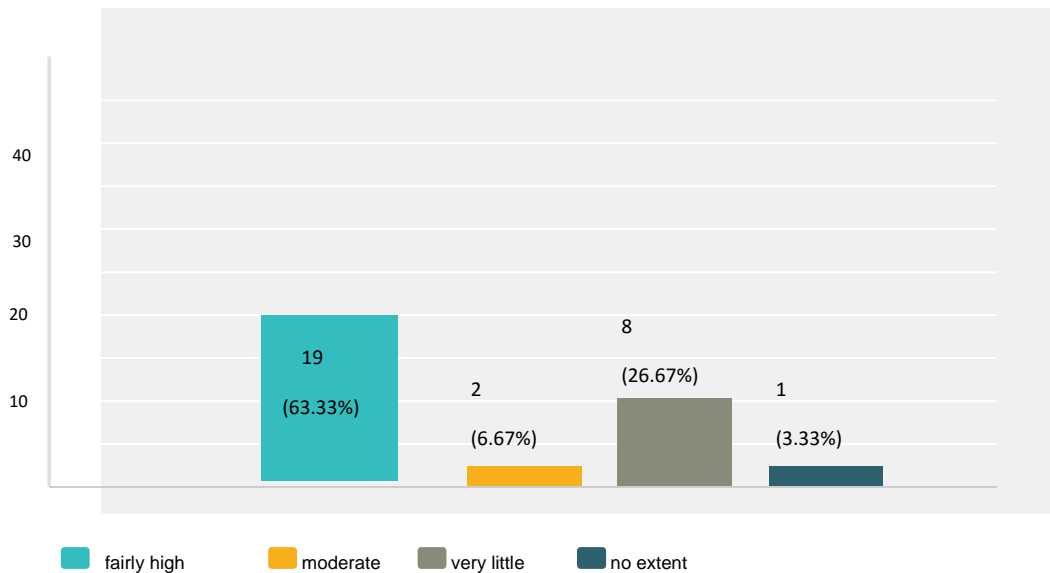
Figure 4. Question 4: Length of time in administration

### Culture and Traditions

This section coincides with Research Question 2, *To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions, or expectations limit their career advancement?* Four questions were given to female administrators to provide responses related to what extent they believed cultural encouragement, culture approval, culture support, and cultural ties contribute to professional career advancement. Responses from Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 discuss the information (Figures 5, 6, 7, & 8).

Question 5 is about encouragement of traditions of culture for female administrators. The results were *fairly high* at 19 (63.33%), *very little* at 8 (26.67%), *moderate* at 2 (6.67%), *no extent* at 1 (3.33%). The majority with approximately two-thirds of participants believed their culture and traditions provided encouragement. Approximately one-third of the participants stated there was little encouragement given to women to become professional people (Figure 5).





*Figure 5. Question 5: Traditions of culture encouragement to become a professional person*

Question 6 addresses cultural approval as to professional careers for Navajo female administrators, using scale titles of *fairly high*, *moderate*, *very little* and *no extent*. The results were in the following order: *fairly high* at 21 (70.00%), *very little* at 6 (20.00%), *moderate* at 2 (6.67%), *no extent* at 1 (3.33%), making a total of 30 (100%) responses. Approximately three-fourths of the participants believed they receive approval to be a professional person. Approximately one-fourth believed they did not receive strong approval (Figure 6).

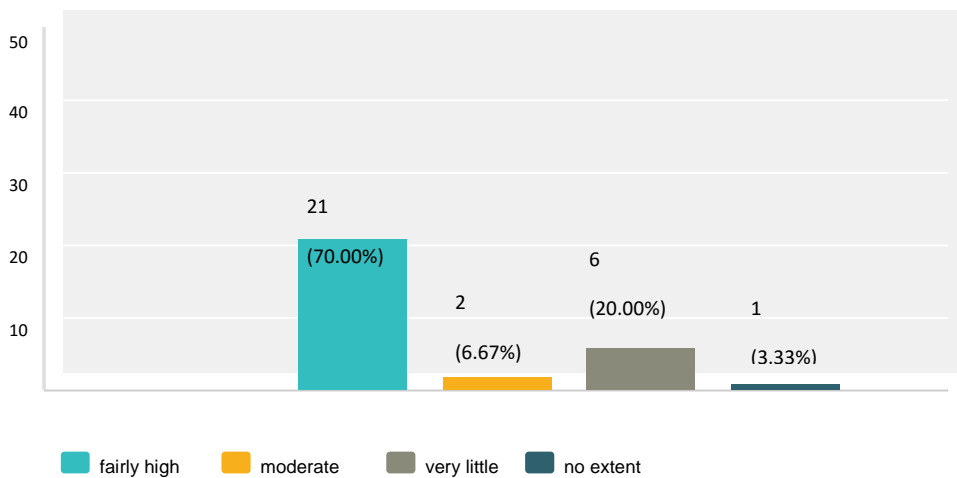


Figure 6. Question 6: Cultural approval of professional career

Question 7 addressed cultural support for female administrators to get ahead in career advancement, using scale titles of, *fairly high*, *moderate*, *very little* and *no extent*. The results were *fairly high* at 13 (43.3%), *very little* at 10 (33.33%), *moderate* at 6 (20.00%), and *no extent* at 1 (3.33%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. Respondents indicated they generally felt they received cultural support. However, approximately one-third felt support was limited or they did not receive support for career advancement (Figure 7).

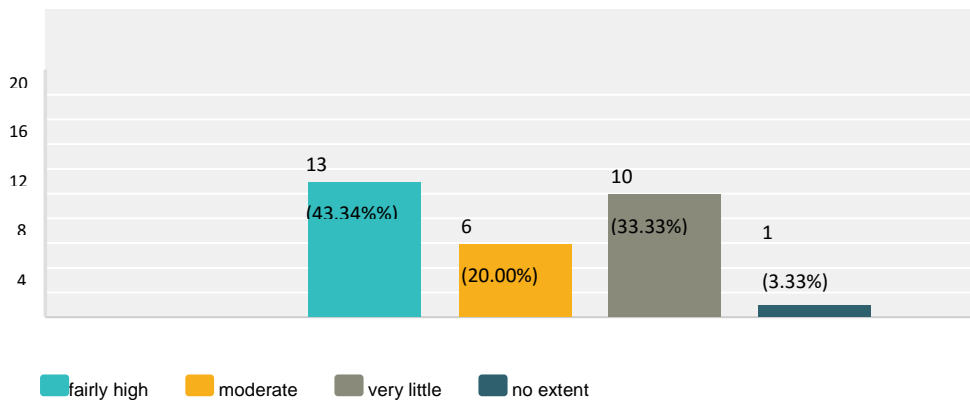


Figure 7. Question 7: Cultural support for women's career advancement

Question 8 asked whether cultural ties influenced their decisions as female administrators, using scales titled *very much*, *somewhat*, *little*, and *none*. The results indicated the following: *somewhat* at 14 (46.67%), *very much* at 13 (43.33%), *little* at 2 (6.67%), *none* at 1 (3.33%), totaling 30 (100%) responses. Data indicated that respondents believed their culture significantly influenced their decisions as school administrators. Approximately (90%) felt this influence. A very modest number felt that culture was not particularly influential (Figure 8).

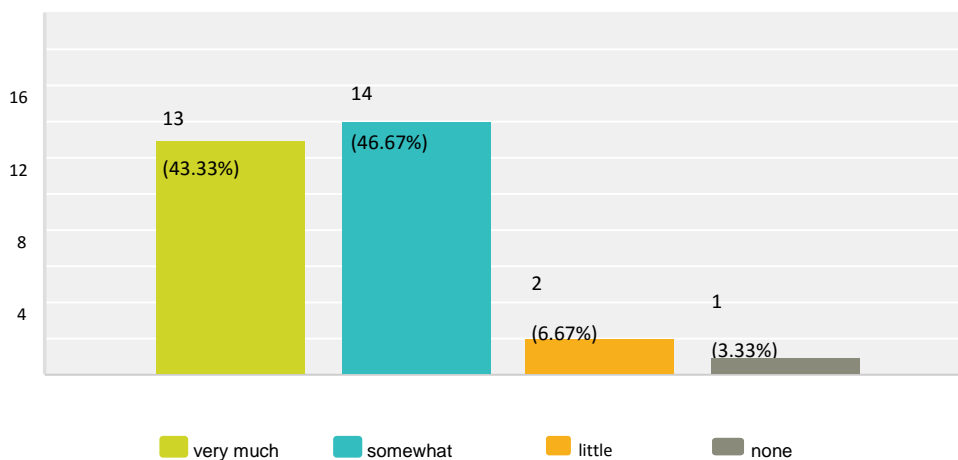


Figure 8. Question 8: Cultural ties influencing decisions of female administrator

### Experiences of Obstacles and Barriers

This section addresses Research Question 1 asking, “*What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they move along their career ladder?*” Six questions were given to Navajo female administrators to give responses as to their obstacles and barriers, such as help from the school district, help

from others, fairness and equity in salaries, recognition for effort, and amount of respect as a woman, as they advanced through their career ladder: Questions 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 were considered for this research question as to obstacles and barriers (Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 14).

Question 9 is on how much help was from the school district with a scale of *very much*, *moderate*, *very little*, and *none*. The results from the respondents were as follows: *moderate* at 10 (33.33%), *none* at 9 (30.00%), *very much* at 7 (23.33%), *very little* at 4 (13.33%). A total of 30 (100%) responses. *Moderate* at 10 (33.33%) to *none* at 9 (30.00%), a slight difference between the two values as opposed to (26.67%) for *very much* to *very little*. Over half of the respondents believed the school district provided support to female administrators to promote career advancement; a vital part to professional development and school improvement and a majority of *no help* was labeled as a huge factor that stood out as a maximum percentage (Figure 9).

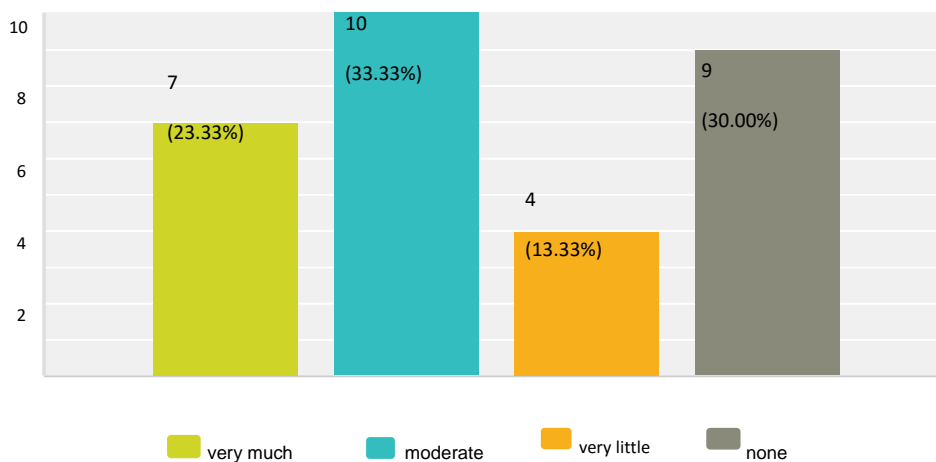


Figure 9. Question 9: Help from school district to advance career

Question 11 asked about help from others in career advancement, using a scale of *very much*, *somewhat*, *little* and *none*. The results were *somewhat* at 11 (36.67%), *very much* at 9 (30.00%), *little* at 5 (16.67%), *none* at 5 (16.67%), totaling 30 (100%) responses. Results show that two-thirds of the respondents received help from outside the school district. Approximately one-third felt they received little or no help from others (Figure 10).

The results for Question 12 show where the outside support came from.

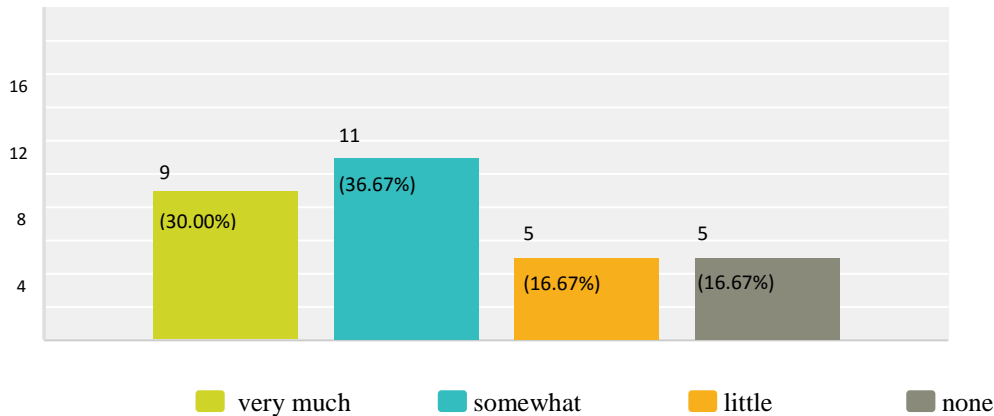


Figure 10. Question 11: How much help did you get from others in career advancement?

Question 12 is related to sources given for help and encouragement of female administrators for career advancement, using four sources of choice, *other male administrators*, *other female administrators*, *friends*, and *family*. Results were family at 7 (41.18%); friends at 5 (29.41%); other female administrators at 5 (29.41%); and other male administrators at 0 (0%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. Family members gave the most encouragement. The second highest level of encouragement was from friends and other female administrators. No one felt they received support and encouragement from other male administrators (Figure 11).

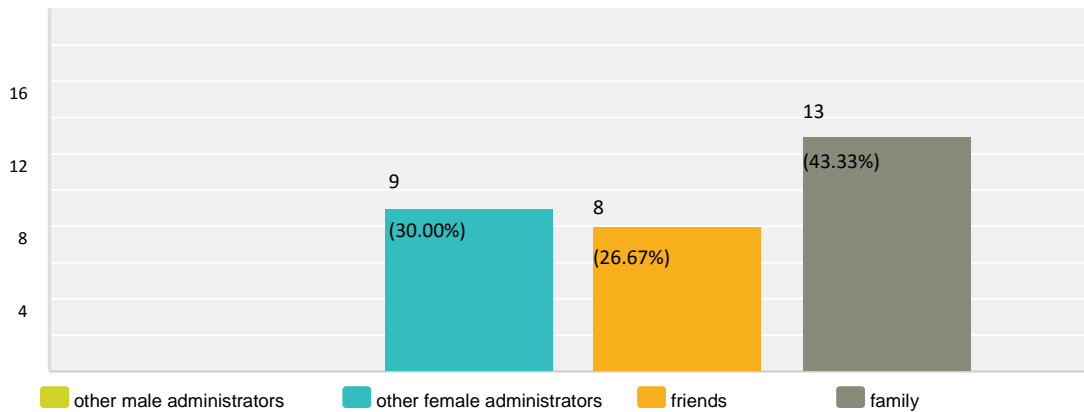


Figure 11. Question 12: Sources in career advancement

Question 14 relates to fairness and equity in salaries and other factors for female administrators, using a scale of *very much*, *somewhat*, *little* and *none*. Results were as follows: *somewhat* at 17 (56.67%), *little* at 7 (20.00%), *very much* at 4 (13.33%), *none* at 3 (10.00%), a total 30 (100%) responses. Although 56% of the respondents felt the system was somewhat fair and equitable, 13% felt it was very fair, 30% thought fairness was lacking (Figure 12).

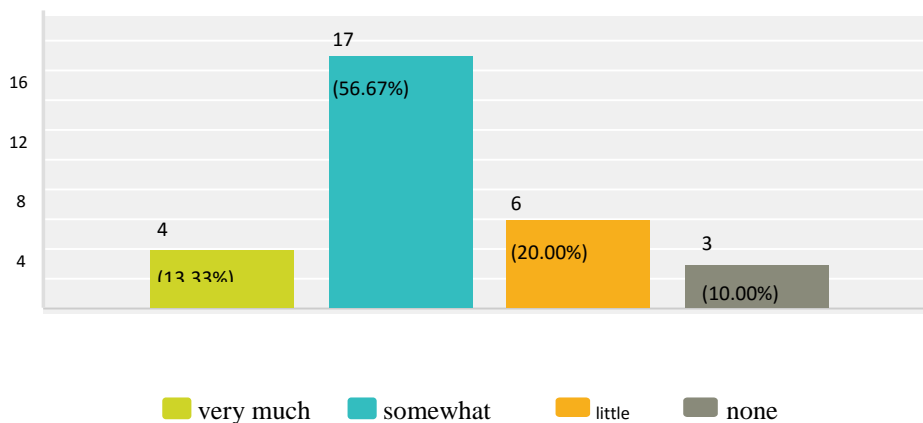


Figure 12. Question 14: Fairness and equity in salaries and other factors

Question 15 relates to female administrators' recognition and efforts, using a scale of *very much*, *somewhat*, *little*, and *none*. Results were *somewhat* at 14 (46.67%), *little* at 9 (30.00%), *very much* at 6 (20.00%), *none* at 1 (3.33%), a total 30 (100%) responses. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents believed they were recognized for their efforts. Approximately one-third of the respondents did not believe their efforts were satisfactorily recognized at a satisfactory level (Figure 13).

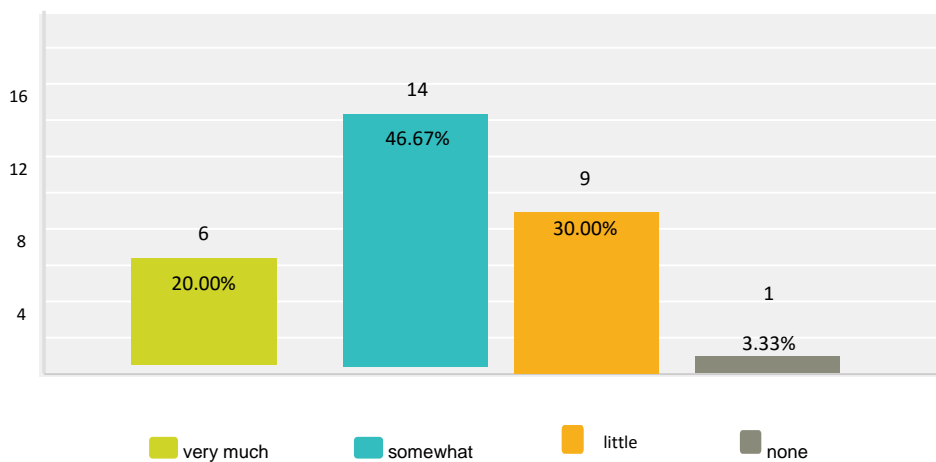


Figure 13. Question 15: Female administrators recognized for efforts

While question 15 asked if female administrators were recognized for their efforts in a more general sense, Question 16 relates to whether or not men and women are equally recognized by the school district, using a scale of *very often*, *somewhat*, *little*, and *none*. The results were as follows: *somewhat* at 14 (46.67%), *little* at 10 (33.33%), *none* at 4 (13.33%), and *very often* at 2 (6.67%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. Approximately half of the female administrators believed men and women were equally recognized by the school district. However of this group 46.3% felt this was somewhat true.

The belief of equal recognition was further weakened by the 46% who felt there was little or no recognition by the school district (Figure 14).

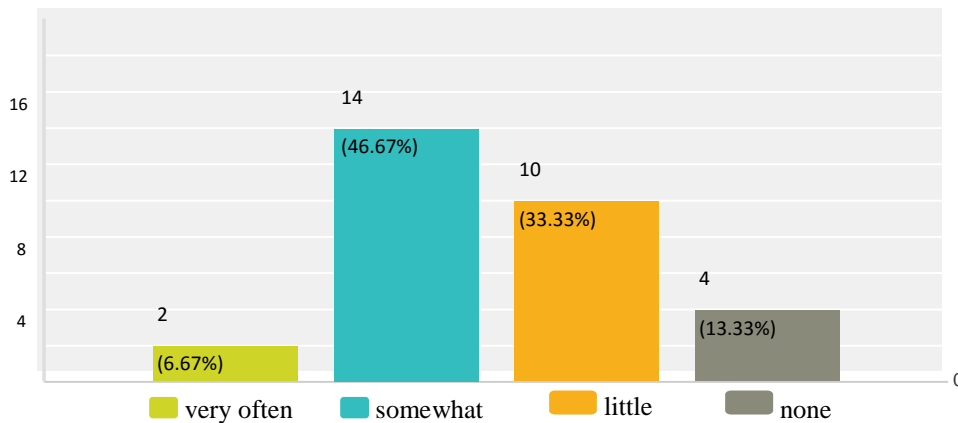


Figure 14. Question 16: Men and women equally recognized by school district

### Different Obstacles than Male Counterpart

This section addresses Research Question 3 asking, “*Do female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counterparts?*” Five questions were given to female administrators for responses of *more* or *less* encouragement than male counterparts, if men and women were equally recognized by the district, positive or negative impact in workplace, and respect received from employees to supervisors. Questions 10, 17, 18, 19, and 20 provide information for the following (Figures 15, 16, 17, 18, & 19).

Question 10 is *more* or *less* encouragement than male counterpart, using a scale of *less*, *somewhat more*, *about the same*, and *much more*. Results were *less* at 14 (46.67%), *somewhat more* at 7 (23.33%), *about the same* at 7 (23.33%), *much more* at 2 (6.67%), a total 30 (100%) responses. *Less encouragement* was the highest percentage, followed by



*somewhat more* and *about the same* then *much more*. Results show the respondents believed there was *less encouragement* for female administrators who were currently holding administrative positions compared to their male counterpart (Figure 15).

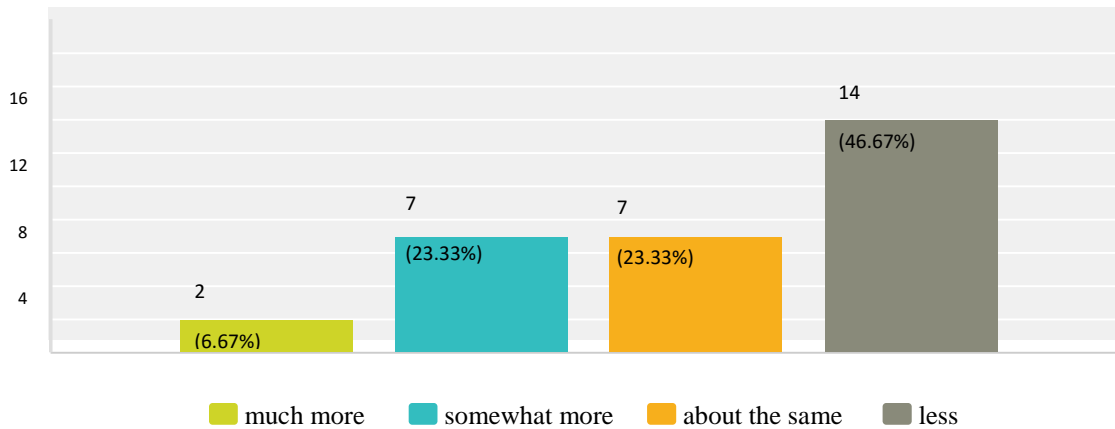


Figure 15. Question10: Encouragement from male counterparts

Question 17 is regarding the impact by others in a workplace, using a scale of *positively*, *same as men*, *negatively*, and *none*. The results were as follows: *Negatively* at 14 (46.67%), *none* at 8 (26.67%), *positively* at 6 (20.00%), *same as men* at 2 (6.67%), a total 30 (100%) responses. Many of the women (46.67%) stated they have encountered negative impact from others in a workplace. The next highest group reported others had no impact. Approximately 26% felt they received positive impact or the same as men (Figure 16).

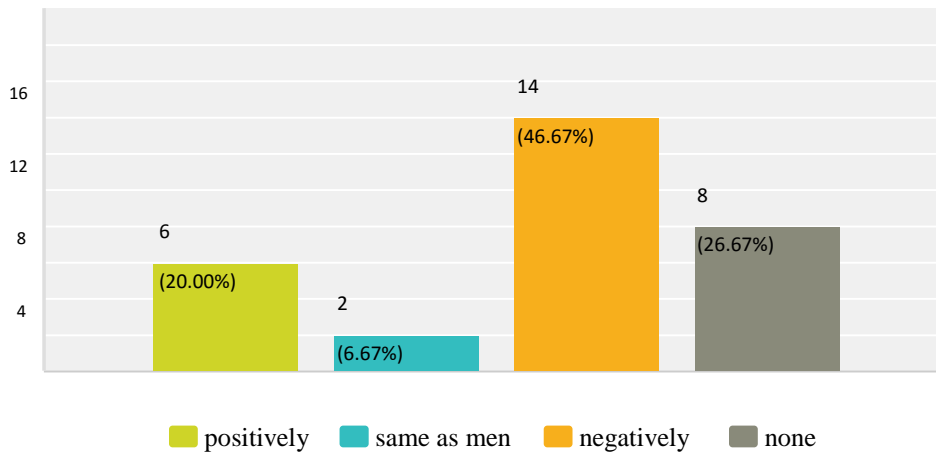


Figure 16. Question 17: Positively or negatively impacted by others in a workplace

Questions 18, 19, and 20 provided information about how much respect respondents received. Question 18 asked about the level of respect from other employees using a scale of *very much*, *some*, *little* and *none*. Results were as follows: *very much* at 12 (40.00%), *some* at 10 (33.33%), *little* at 7 (23.33%), *none* at 1 (3.33%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. Forty percent of the women believed they received much respect from the employees they supervised, followed by another 33% who felt they received some respect, a total of 73% responding positively; however, 26% believed they received little or no respect from the employees they supervised (Figure 17).

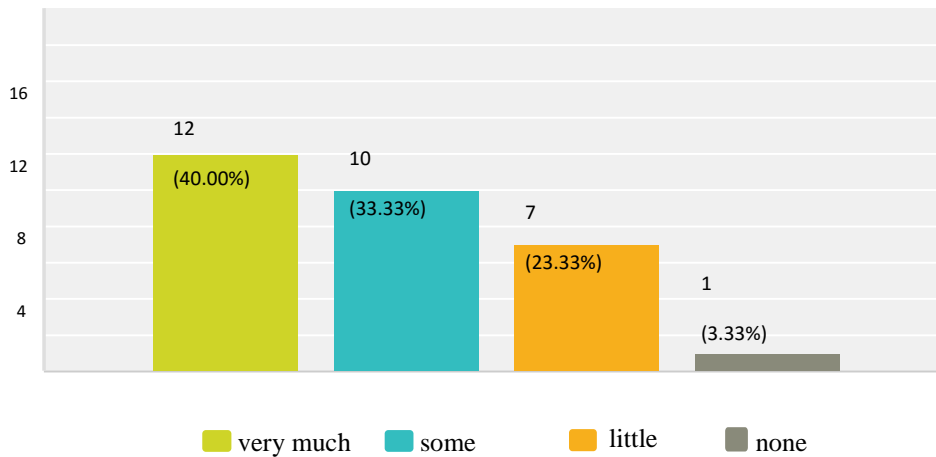


Figure 17. Question 18: Respect received from employees you supervise

Question 19 asked about the amount of respect related to being a woman, using a scale of *most*, *some*, *little*, and *none*. The results were *little* at 12 (40.00%), *most* at 8 (26.67%), *some* at 6 (20.00%), and *none* at 4 (13.33%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. Fifty-three percent believed any respect they received had little or no relationship to being a women. Forty-six percent believed that some of the respect was from being a women. The results of this question were ambiguous because we do not know whether those that believed that little to none of respect they received was related to being a women meant that the respect they received was unrelated to being a women or respect was negatively impacted due to their gender. It is quite possible that the women felt a relatively high level of respect as indicted in Question 18, but that is unrelated to being a women (Figure 18).

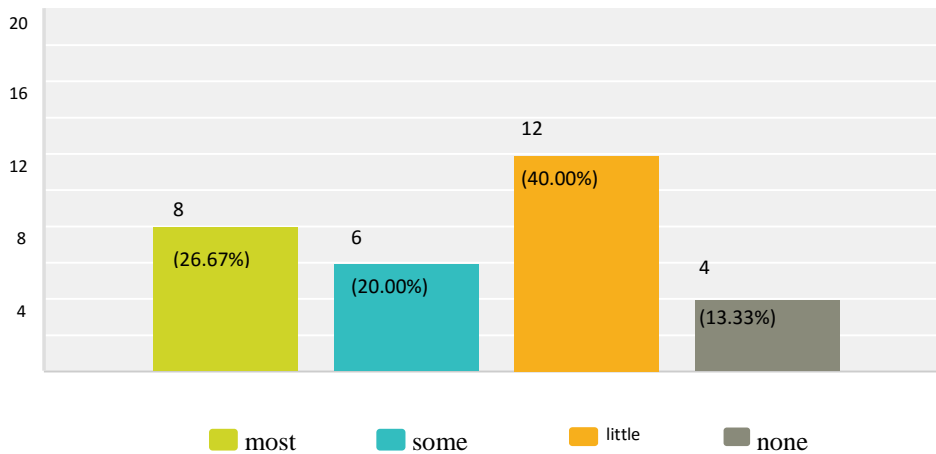


Figure 18. Question 19: Amount of respect related to being a woman

Question 20 gave information about the amount of respect received or not received as related to cultural traditions and belief issues for Navajo female administrators. The scale titles were *very much*, *somewhat*, *little*, and *none*. Results were *somewhat* at 11 (36.67%), *little* at 7 (23.33%), *very much* at 6 (20.00%), and *none* at 4 (20.00%), totaling 30 responses. Responses suggest that female administrators are divided regarding the respect they received from cultural traditions. Fifty percent believed they got some respect, whereas 43% believed they got little or no respect from their cultural traditions and beliefs. These differences may result from an inconsistency between early cultural beliefs, traditions, and stories and Navajo being a matrilineal society in which the female line is carried on from the mother's clan, followed by the patrilineal side, the father's clan (Figure 19).

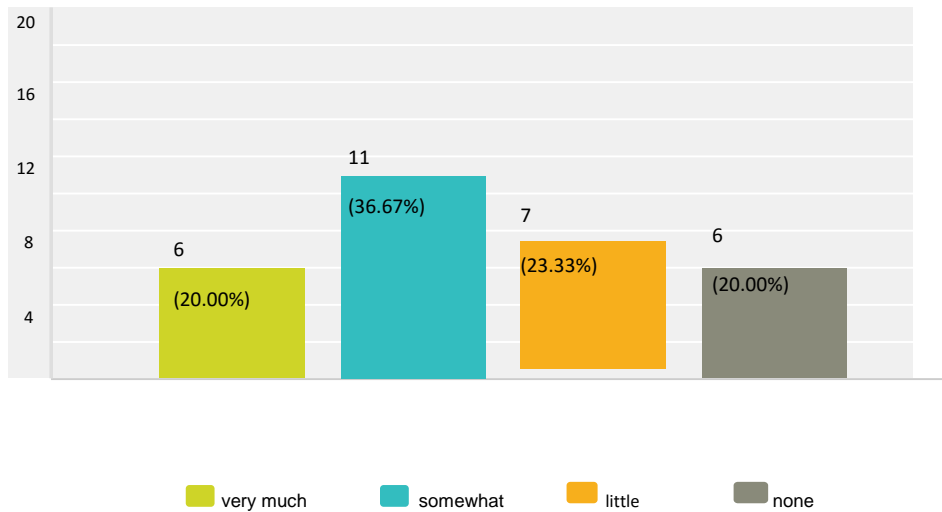


Figure 19. Question 20: Extent of respect

### Future Plans

This final section contains personal and future plans for Navajo female administrators as they continue to move along their career ladder as professionals and how much encouragement to give to other women to join school administration.

Questions 13 and 21 represent the responses given by female administrators (Figures 20 & 21).

Question 13 inquired how much longer would the administrator be in administration, using scales *of until retirement*, *several more years*, and *not for long*. Results were *until retirement* at 17 (56.67%), *several more years* at 11 (36.67%), *not long* at 2 (6.67%), a total 30 (100%) responses. The majority (53.34%) of female administrators stated they will stay *five to nine years* and *until retirement*. As a result, the significant value was excellent for retention of female administrators with more experience and years of service (Figure 20).

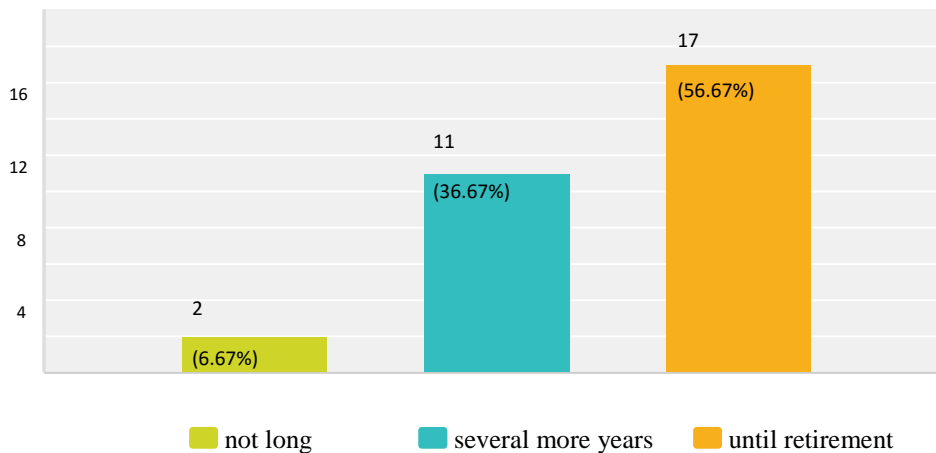
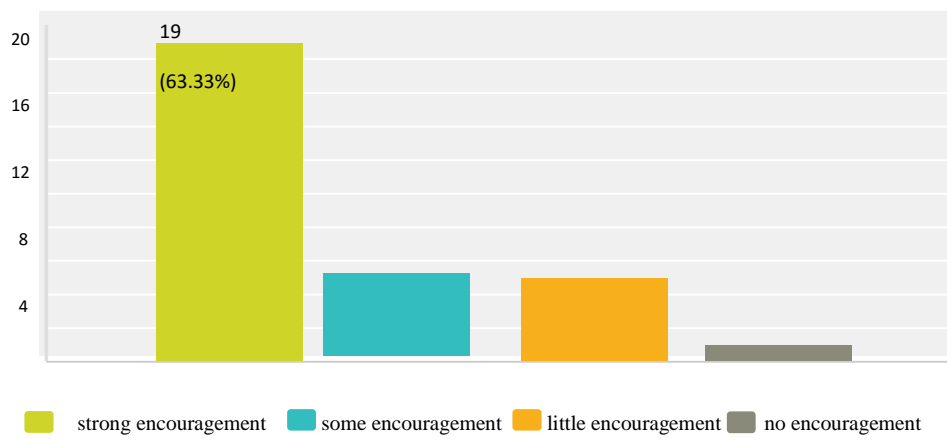


Figure 20. Question 13: Plans to stay in administration

Question 21 is related to encouraging other women to pursue school administration as a career, using a scale of *strong encouragement*, *some encouragement*, *little encouragement*, and *no encouragement*. Results were as follows: *Strong encouragement* at 19 (63.33%), *some encouragement* at 5 (16.67%), *little encouragement* at 5 (16.67%), *no encouragement* at 1 (3.33%), a total of 30 (100%) responses. There is *strong encouragement* for other women to enter administration with a combined positive rate at approximately 80%. Yet 20% offered little or no encouragement. Their greatest resources were the support of family and friends (70.00%), which kept them in administration (Figure 21).



*Figure 21.* Question 21: Encourage other women to go into school administration

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter is a summary of the research with findings related to the literature review with conclusions and recommendations for further study on barriers and encounters of female administrators, specifically Navajo women.

As a female administrator, career path and promotions are important as are opportunities for professional growth. The purpose of study was to investigate the barriers and encounters perceived by Navajo female administrators as they move along their career ladder.

Chapter 2 presents a brief historical view of employment for men and women before and after World War II, gender gap, and barriers women face. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for this study. A Likert-scale format consisting of 21 questions was created through Survey Monkey.

Chapter 4 consists of survey results. Graphs were used to display the results in percentages and numbers. Results of the data were shown to answer the following questions:

1. What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they move along their career ladder?
2. To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions, or expectations limit their career advancement?
3. Do Navajo female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counterpart?



Based on early stereotypes of women depicting them as poor candidates for professional leadership, and traditional Navajo cultural beliefs and teachings, as a researcher, I thought contemporary female Navajo school administrators would express a lack of opportunity and support in their career choice. For the most part, this turned out not to be the case.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked, *What obstacles or barriers do Navajo female school administrators believe they experienced as they move along their career ladder?* Survey Questions 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16 were linked to this research question. The Navajo female administrators identified and ranked the highest practices presented for each survey question. Data taken from the surveys indicated their perceptions pertaining to obstacles and barriers were generally positive. Participants received help from the school district and help from others. They believed there was fairness and equity in salaries, recognition of female effort, and that men and women were equally recognized by the school district. The least ranked statement was about sources that gave Navajo female administrators help and encouragement.

The outcomes were related to the following literature: the key ingredients to building a successful business were winning teams and keeping a confidence level up because once lost, confidence was difficult to regain. Hargreaves (1998) stated positive emotion creates energy; negative emotions sap it. There are many ways of understanding the role of emotions in organizations. Roles of emotion are important in educational

leadership that involves extensive emotional work of being responsible for motivating others and managing moods and feelings for those involved (Bass, 2007, p. 466).

Women need help and support from the school district to gain understanding of attaining higher positions and to be informed of future positions as they become available. Mentorship and plans of actions from the district would serve this purpose.

Mentoring and coaching are believed to increase credibility for management support and also development strategies for administrators. In addition, mentoring serves in developing communication and importance of continued professional growth. An action plan for quality personnel would be an essential action step from the school district to increase help from the district to Navajo female administrators. A plan composed of purposes, budget needs, strategies, leadership responsibilities, and accountability that include full consideration of quality female administrators to be mentors would increase career advancement. Such recommendations are the primary responsibilities of district leaders, school boards, and administrative leaders throughout the school district (Norton, 2002, pp. 6-7).

Team relationship can build positive communication and relationships. “We must work with human needs and capabilities and potentials rather than against them if we are to create positive teams that succeed and at the same time, bolster the health and well-being of those who work within them” (Norton, 2002, p. 7).

Another author perceived that the team should share tasks that require people to work together in communicating, sharing information, and possibly debating about

decisions and ways to best do the job. The other was contributing to the organizational goals (West, 2012, p. 30).

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked, *To what extent do Navajo female administrators believe cultural beliefs, traditions or expectations limit their career advancement?* Survey Questions 5, 6, 7, 8 were linked to this research question. The Navajo female administrators identified and gave rankings to the highest statements and practices presented for each survey question. Data were taken from the survey that indicated the following: (a) encouragement of traditions as to culture to become a professional person; (b) cultural approval for professional career, (c) cultural support to get ahead in career advancement, and (d) cultural ties influence decisions to be a female administrator. There were at least a few (one-fourth) of Navajo female administrators who felt they had very little encouragement, approval, and support from their culture to become a professional person, to get ahead in pursuing professional career advancement.

The outcomes were related to the following literature review: Cultural taboo can limit Navajo female administrators advancing through their career path to become leaders. In the third world (Reid, 2001, p 2) there was a quarrel that split men from women for four years. Though the group reunited, the results gave birth to a women cannot be a leader mentality because women stated, “We can live without men” but the leadership only brought chaos and confusion among women leadership. Some Navajos still respect the legend, especially among the elders, spiritual leaders, cultural teachers, and medicine people (as cited in Salabiye-Gishey, 2014, p. 33).

A few years ago, in 1998, Lenora Fulton faced criticism from Navajo Dine' men and women that Navajo women should not be leaders as it would lead to chaos. Navajo women have been discouraged even in local community politics. But even so, women are chosen for Miss Navajo Nation within the government and serve as ambassadors of the Navajo Nation. The author further explained how women suffered colonialism and continue to face counter gender oppression (Denetdale, 2006, pp. 9-10).

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked, *Do Navajo female administrators believe they encounter more or different obstacles than their male counter parts?* Survey questions 10, 17, 18, 19, 20 were linked to this research question. The Navajo female administrators identified and gave rankings to the highest practices presented for each survey question. Data taken from the surveys indicated the participants receive respect from employees they supervised. Respect related to being a woman was somewhat neutral, and respect received related to culture and belief issues as a female administrator was about the same. The least ranking of practices and statements by the Navajo female participants were encouragement from their male counterpart. It was also unclear whether the level of respect they received by others was related to being a woman.

The outcomes were related to the following literature review: There was a time the executive suite could not break the glass ceiling when the President of the United States made a comment why he should not appoint a woman in charge. President Richard Nixon made public why he would not appoint a woman to the U.S. Supreme Court. Nixon stated, "I don't think a woman should be in any government job whatsoever

. . . mainly because they are erratic and emotional. Men are erratic and emotional, too, but the point is a woman is more likely to be.” Under Nixon, women had no chance of attaining influential leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 1).

Male mentors working with females can cause problems if they began to work together and spending a lot of time communicating with one another. According to Driscoll and Bova (1980) and Gutek and Sprell (1985) mentoring can cause relationship issues as a result of jealous spouses and resentful co-workers. An example of problems faced in cross gender mentoring relationships can result in office gossip, which gossip ends up placing attractive females in a position to defend themselves against discrediting attacks and innuendos (Cunningham, 1984). To avoid rumors, Clawson and Kram (1984) suggested the female and her male mentor must be careful and watch their behaviors to avoid appearing overly friendly (Belle, 1989).

Because of male dominance in society, recruitment and selection procedures are managed largely by men or by a tokenism of the few women who get promoted (Riehl & Byrd, 1997, p. 46; Sokoloff, 1980; Stockard & Johnson, 1981). Male dominance is one reason why a few women get promoted, leaving a barrier for other women in the workplace, according to Kanter (1997) and Shakeshaft (1989).

Women in technological careers feel out of place if dominated by males and consequently will not do as well as opposed to the male. Women in computer science or engineering careers face a male-oriented culture with a message of “women just don’t fit” (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Robinson & McIlwee, 1991; Wright, 1997). Male tendencies of competitive posturing and boasting are seen in computing career and academic

environments, and women are perceived as knowing very little in comparison to male peers (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). Consequently, women may not do well and lose confidence (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2006).

In summary, majority of Navajo female administrators believe school districts provide support and opportunities for female administrators seeking career advancement and promotions. Yet nearly as many stated that little support was given from the district regarding career path and promotions. On the other hand, respondents received a good deal of support from other sources that included family and friends, but to a lesser extent from other female administrators. Encouragement of support from family and friends plays a major role. Besides the support of family and friends, some support was from female administrators. However, a disturbing finding was that the respondents reported receiving no help from the male counterpart as far as career advancement and promotions were concerned.

Culture traditions and beliefs for Navajo female administrators show strong results. Two-thirds believed cultural traditions and beliefs provided encouragement, approval, and support for career choice, leadership, and administration. This was positive, though approximately one-third believed culture provided little encouragement for Navajo female administrators advancing through their career paths to become professional people.

Whether Navajo female administrators actually encountered obstacles different from their male counterpart remains unanswered because the study only gathered data regarding perceptions. It remains unanswered whether or not female Navajo

administrators' perceptions are different than male administrators or even non-Navajo female administrators.

With respect to female Navajo administrators' perceptions regarding encouragement, nearly half felt they received less encouragement than their male counterpart. Approximately 70% believed they were negatively impacted as a result of being a woman. Yet, on the flipside, approximately 70% believes they were respected. However, most believed that the respect they received had little to do with being a woman. Nevertheless, Navajo female administrators plan to stay in school administration and are willing to encourage other women to go into administration.

### **Limitations**

1. The sample consisted of 30 participants, a small population of Navajo female administrators from public and bureau-operated schools and did not include all schools or counties, thus the findings are limited.
2. The experiences of 30 participants would not represent all women in administration.
3. Lack of male data to make a comparison limited the study as only women administrators participated.
4. A selection of the population of Navajo female administrators is restricted as there are fewer administrators in the county of McKinley and San Juan, New Mexico.
5. There is limited literature and research on Navajo female school administrators.
6. The literature review considered other ethnic groups to find barriers and encounters of female administrators for this study.

## **Recommendations for Support**

Administrators are important educational leaders, hence training skills would help them to identify insights and trends to form strategic initiatives and inspire others to perform at the highest levels to achieve a certain amount of growth and positive results at the end of the year. Hansen (2007) suggested one strategy for promotion was to connect with someone higher in the organization. Another is keeping records that would put the organization in good light. Additionally, loyalty and commitment to the school are important as well.

Hansen (2007) referred to the following as other strategies:

- To practice self-advancement by sharing accomplishments and various projects that occur in the previous months through newsletters and announcements.
- Build a rapport with the big bosses and learn more about his or her interests and hobbies and chat during conferences, parties, or informal activities.
- Expand your knowledge and skills that are critical to the organization.

Employees who want to get ahead pay attention to trends and events outside their area of specialty.

- Forming a network is another way and the more people you know. When they begin to know your strengths, abilities, and your ambitions, the more likely your name will be mentioned when opportunities arise. Networking will help you learn more about the organization and the people involved.



- Volunteering to help out increases your value within the district. Your interests and desires will help you to succeed. Earn a reputation to be professional and cooperative to prove that you are the one making a name for yourself.
- Be a team player and share successes with your team. Your reputation and value will promote the possibility of advancement within the school district.
- Create your opportunities by using proposals for a new position, which can help the next time you ask for a promotion.

Professional development for leaders is one way to make improvements.

Planning ahead for all administrators for training is effective and making sure trainings are facilitated. Leaders can pick up more ideas and supports, and even more creates a strong leadership for continuous improvement.

Vandiver (2008) related that far too often professional development trainings are left to the discretion of the administrator and left aside or pushed aside. Vandiver further noted that planning in advance as a team and meeting regularly for discussions keeps everyone on the same page. Teamwork provides the possibility to bring about unity with the entire district so everyone is on the same page. Training and orientation for staff expectations at the beginning of the year could help eliminate problems. On-going training for staff creates a positive school culture and effective communication.

A concerned individual stated that the most important piece of communication can break down in an unenthusiastic workplace. Staff members go against one another about issues involving negative communication and no longer speak to each other, or the air of negativity causes employees to no longer trust the information that others provide.

Further, a negative work environment can lead people to believing that their answer is the only correct way and to disregard all inputs by others as invalid, which will cause communication to erode, and any recognition as to efforts will fail, too. Women in general are truly hard workers and deserve some recognition (Johnson, personal interview, 2016).

Mentoring and networking foster insights, knowledge, and opportunities for administrators. Women administrators should be given more mentor support so as to build possibilities for career advancement. Providing resources and help for women would bring about equal treatment that would increase their confidence and recognition in the workplace. Continuous support and encouragement will support career advancement for women.

Though there were some barriers and encounters, cultural support, inequality, negative influence, participants of this study recommended strong encouragement for other women to go into school administration. Above all, females endure strength from family encouragement and support of females to stay in administration until they retire. The glass ceiling may have cracks, but it remains unbroken.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for further study are limitless considering the obstacles and barriers females encounter. Suggested areas for future research include the following: Extend studies to explore additional schools in New Mexico, increase the number of participants in the study, involve other female ethnic groups to increase viewpoints and data, involve men to make comparison, and include differences in age.

## **Conclusion and Final Thoughts**

There are numerous barriers to women advancement in school administration. Only a few were studied and discussed in this research. However, women must continue to strive to overcome workplace barriers and encounters of underrepresentation and gender gap along the path of career advancement. The majority of findings were consistent with the literature and studies of others. Women in workplaces have been the focus of most of the review. The women in this study were women of great strength, integrity, and credibility. They possessed extensive leadership skills, knowledge of their work, extensive experiences, and strong network with personal and professional mentors. Even more they have persevered through difficult work places, supervisors, long work hours, hectic travel schedules, juggling of work-life, personal challenges, yet all with a smile on their faces. They have inspired me with true sense of self-knowledge and perceptions. I commend them for their hard work in providing services.... *for our children, our leaders of tomorrow.*

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APPENDIX A  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**Survey Questions:**

**1. Is your ethnic background Navajo?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**2. What is your current administrative position?**

- ☐ Principal      ☐ Vice-Principal      ☐ Dean of Instruction

**3. What level is your school?**

- ☐ Elementary      ☐ Middle School      ☐ High School

**4. How long have you been in administration?**

- ☐ 1-3 years      ☐ 4-7 years      ☐ 5-9 years      ☐ 10 or more years

**5. To what extent do the traditions of your culture encourage you to become a professional person?**

- ☐ fairly      ☐ high      ☐ moderate      ☐ very little      ☐ no extent

**6. To what extent does your culture approve of your professional career?**

- ☐ fairly      ☐ high      ☐ moderate      ☐ very little      ☐ no extent

**7. To what extent does your culture give support for women to get ahead in their career advancement?**

- ☐ fairly      ☐ high      ☐ moderate      ☐ very little      ☐ no extent



**8. To what extent have cultural ties influenced your decision as a female administrator?**

- ☐ very much ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**9. How much help did you get from the school district as you advanced in your career?**

- ☐ very much ☐ moderate ☐ very little ☐ none

**10. Do you feel that you get more or less encouragement than your male counterpart during your career advancement?**

- ☐ much more ☐ somewhat more ☐ about the same ☐ less

**11. How much help did you get from others in career advancement?**

- ☐ very much ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**12. Which sources gave you the most help and encouragement in your career advancement?**

- ☐ other male administrators ☐ other female administrators ☐ friends ☐ family

**13. How long do you plan to stay in administration?**

- ☐ not long ☐ several more years ☐ until retirement

**14. Do you believe there is fairness and equity in salaries and other factors for female administrators?**

☐ very much ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**15. Do you feel that female administrators are mostly recognized for their effort?**

☐ very much ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**16. Do you believe that men and women are equally recognized by the school district?**

☐ very often ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**17. As a woman, do you believe you were positively or negatively impacted by others in a workplace?**

☐ positively ☐ same as men ☐ negatively ☐ none

**18. How much respect do you feel you received from the employees you supervise?**

☐ very much ☐ some ☐ little ☐ none

**19. Do you believe the amount of respect you get is related to you being a woman?**

☐ most ☐ some ☐ little ☐ none

**20. To what extent do you believe the amount of respect you receive or don't receive do you think is related to cultural traditions and belief issues?**

☐ very much ☐ somewhat ☐ little ☐ none

**21. To what extent would you encourage other women to go into school administration?**

☐ strong  
encouragement

☐ some  
encouragement

☐ little  
encouragement

☐ no  
encouragement

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

## CONSENT FORM

### INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

### RESEARCHERS

Nicholas Appleton, Principal Investigator and Co-investigator Ms. Juanita Becenti, graduate student has invited your participation in a research study.

### STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to study and examine barriers, experiences, and encounters perceived by Navajo Female Administrators and to address barriers and thus result in better representation for women and promotions for top administrative positions in education. Our findings and what we studied will also be useful in other areas of employment for women.

-OR-

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of male Superintendents and none have explored Barriers and Encounters of Navajo Female Administrators.

### DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then as a participant you will be given a Likert scale survey of (21) questions to answer. Participants will be randomly selected and notified by phone or email and sign the consent form.

If you say YES, then your participation will last approximately 12 minutes to answer the restricted responses in a Likert format.

### RISKS

And as with any research, there are some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

### BENEFITS

The possible/main benefits of your participation in the research will give Female Principals better representation for promotions and be given more support through their

career paths. The study will assist employers to seek changes and give women opportunities for top administrative positions.

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the possible benefits would be your participation in the research and providing responses of experiences you perceived as administrator.

#### NEW INFORMATION

If the researcher finds new information during the study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then she will provide this information to you.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you.

#### WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is okay for you to say NO, even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later and withdraw from the study at any time.

If applicable: Your decision will not affect your relationship with Arizona State University or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

(If the subjects are students, patients, clients or employees, advise that participants is voluntary and that non-participation or withdrawal from the study will not affect their grade, treatment, care, employment status, as appropriate).

#### COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researcher want your decision about participating in eh study to be absolutely voluntary.

-OR-

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

#### COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you agree to participate in the study, then your consent does not waive any of your legal rights. However, no funds have been set aside to compensate you in the event of injury.

#### VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent will be answered by:

Nicholas Appleton, Ed244E, Farmer Building MC 5411

Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287 (480) 965-6788 or (480) 727-6433

Juanita Becenti, P.O. Box 99, Continental Divide, New Mexico 87312 (505) 713-3003

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Subject's signature	Printed Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Legal Authorized Representative (if applicable)	Printed Name	Date

#### INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with the participation in this research study. Have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent confirm to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_